(a) The process of creation of posts for the National Commission and arrangement of accommodation for housing this body is underway. It is expected that the Commission will start its work during the next quarter of the financial year.

(b) Adequate funds have been sought in the current year for setting up of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

National Policy for Senior Citizens

2131. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had announced adoption of a National Policy for Senior Citizens in 1999;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the progress achieved so far in implementing the basics of the aforesaid policy in providing relief to the elderly persons in various sectors?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI NAGMANI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government has announced the National Policy on Older Persons in the year 1999 which, *inter-alia* visualizes support for financial security, health care and nutrition, shelter, emphasis upon education, training and information needs, provision of appropriate concessions and discounts etc. to senior citizens and special attention to protect and strengthen their legal rights such as to safeguard their life and property. It recognizes persons as 60+ as Senior Citizens.

(c) In order to achieve the objectives of the National Policy on Older Persons, the Government has constituted a National Council for Older Persons in the year 1999 under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment to advise and aid the Government on policies and programmes for older persons and also to provide feedback to the Government on the implementation of the National Policy on Older Persons as well as on specific programmes initiatives for older persons.

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has set-up an inter-Ministerial Committee with the aim of effective implementation of National policy on Older Persons by all the concerned sixteen Ministries/ Departments and recommendations/suggestions made in the meetings of the National Council for Older Persons. The Ministry has also prepared a Plan of Action 2000—2005 and an Annual Plan of Action 2003-04 for implementation by these concerned Ministries/Departments. A list of these Ministries/Departments is at Statement -I (See below)

In addition, on the behest of this Ministry, some of these Ministries/ Departments concerned with the welfare of the older persons are extending various benefits/concessions for their welfare. A Statement showing these benefits/concessions is at Statement-II (See below)

Statement-I

National Policy for Senior Citizens by Shri Manoj Bhattacharya

1. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
2. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
3. Ministry of Finance
4. Ministry of Rural Development
5. Ministry of Urban Development
6. Ministry of Human Resource Development
7. Ministry of Labour
8. Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
9. Ministry of Law and Justice
10. Ministry of Home Affairs
11. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
12. Ministry of Communication
13. Ministry of Railways
14. Ministry of Surface Transport
15. Ministry of Civil Aviation
16. Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs

Statement-II

Concessions and facilites given to Older Persons by different Ministries/Departments of the Government

Sl. No.	Name of the Ministry/Department	Facilities/Benefits given to Senior Citizens
1	Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment	1) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is the nodal Ministry responsible for welfare of the Senior Citizens. It has announced the National Policy on Older Persons that seeks to assure older persons that their concerns are national concerns and they will not live unprotected, ignored and marginalized. The National Policy aims to strengthen their legitimate place in the society and to help older people to live the last phase of their life with purpose, dignity and peace. The National Policy on Older Persons *inter-alia* visualizes support for financial security, health care and nutrition, shelter, emphasis upon education, training and information needs, provision of appropriate concessions, rebates and discounts etc. to Senior Citizens and special attention to protect and strengthen their legal rights such as to safeguard their life and property. The National Policy on Older Persons recognises of senior citizen to a person who has attained the age of 60 years. 2) The Ministry has also written to all the Ministries/State Governments

Sl. No	Name of the Ministry/Department	Facilities/Benefits given to Senior Citizens
		concerned for adopting a uniform age of 60 years for conferring the status of senior citizen to a person and for extending facilities/ concessions to them (copy at Annexure 1). 3) The Ministry is also implementing following schemes for the benefits of Senior Citizens: (a) The Scheme of Assistance to Panchayati Raj Institutions/ Voluntary Organisations/Self Help Groups for Construction of Old Age Homes/multi-service centres for older persons. Under this Scheme, one time construction grant for old age homes/multi-service centre is provided. (b) An Integrated Programme for Older Persons has been formulated by revising the earlier scheme of "Assistance to Voluntary Organisations for Programmes relating to the Welfare of the Aged". Under this Scheme, financial assistance upto 90% of the project cost is provided to NGOs for establishing and maintaining old age homes, day care centres, mobile medicare units and to provide non-institutional services to older persons.

Sl. No.	Name of the Ministry/Department	Facilities/Benefits given to Senior Citizens
2.	Ministry of Rural Development	1) Under the National Old Age Pension Scheme, Central Assistance of Rs. 75/- p.m. is granted to destitute older persons above 65 years. This Scheme has been transferred to the State Plan *w.e.f.* 2002-03. 2) Under the Annapurna Scheme, free foodgrains (wheat or rice) upto 10 Kg. per month are provided to destitute older persons of 65 years or above, who are otherwise eligible for old age pension but are not receiving it. However, the scheme has been transferred to the State Sectors w.e.f 2002-03.
3	Ministry of Finance	1. Section 88 of Finance Act, 1992, provides income tax rebate of upto Rs. 15,000 or actual tax which ever is less to senior citizens who have attained the age of 65 years at any time during the relevant previous year. This has been revised to Rs. 20,000 in the budget for 2003-04. As a result, their income upto Rs. 1.53 lakhs will hencenorth become fully exempt from income tax. Hence, effective exemption limit may hereafter be actually higher and is Rs. 1.83 lakh due to standard deduction. They can get further relief by taking advantage through tax rebate under section 88. 2. For Senior Citizens, the deduction in respect of medical insurance premia is upto Rs. 15.000/- under Section 80D.

Sl. No	Name of the Ministry/Department	Facilities/Benefits given to Senior Citizens
.		3. RBI has permitted higher rates of interest on saving schemes of Senior Citizens (persons having the age of 65 years and above). Accordingly, *w.e.f.* 15.05.01, banks permitted 0.5 per cent higher rate of interest on fixed deposits of Senior Citizen aged between 60 to 65 years & 1 % higher rate of interest to Senior Citizens above 65 years of age. 4. LIC has launched a special pension policy called Varishta Pension Bima Yojana guaranteeing an annual return of 9% in theform of monthly pension scheme to senior citizens aged 55 years and above.
4	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has informed that a decision has been taken regarding reservation of two seats for senior citizens in front row of the buses of the State Road Transport Undertakings.
5	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare	The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, on request from the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, has issued instructions to all State Governments to provide for separate queues for older persons in hospitals for registration and clinical examination.
6	Ministry of Railways	a) Indian Railways provide 30% concession in all Mail/Express including Rajdhani/Shatabadi/Jan

Sl. No.	Name of the Ministry/Department	Facilities/Benefits given to Senior Citizens
		Shatabadi trains for senior citizens aged 60 years and above. b) Indian Railways also have the facility of separate counters for Senior Citizens for purchase/booking/ cancellation of tickets.
7	Ministry of Civil Aviation	1. Indian Airlines is providing 50 per cent Senior Citizen Discount on Normal Economy Class fare for all domestic flights to Indian senior citizens who have completed the age of 65 years in the case of male senior citizens and 63 years in the case of female senior citizens subject to certain conditions. 2. Jet Airways is providing 50 per cent discount on basic fare for all domestic flights in Economy Class to senior citizens having the age of 65 years (male and female). 3. Sahara India Airlines is providing 50 per cent discount on basic fare for all domestic flights in Economy Class to senior citizens having the age of 62 years (men and women).
8.	Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution	The Cabinet has on 5.6.2003 issued necessary guidelines to extend the coverage of the Antyodya Scheme, under which food is provided to destitute old, to cover an additional 50 lakh Below Poverty Line families including 60+ population.

Sl. No	Name of the Ministry/Department	Facilities/Benefits given to Senior Citizens
9.	MCD, Delhi	MCD, Delhi, has opened a separate counter for senior citizens for submission of property tax.
10.	Miscellaneous	1. Telephone connection is given on priority to senior citizens of age 65 years and above by the Ministry of Communications. 2. On the request of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India has advised Chief Justices of all High Courts in the country to accord priority to cases involving older persons and ensure their expeditious disposal.

Demonstration by blind people

2132. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than 300 blind people held a demonstration in the first week of December, 2003 at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi;

(b) if so, what are their demands;

(c) how Government propose to meet them; and

(d) by when the Disability Act is likely to be fully implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI KAILASH MEGHWAL): (a) As reported by the office of the Deputy Commissioner of police, New Delhi District, New Delhi around 125 visually handicapped persons held a demonstration at Jantar Mantar on 2.12.2003 under the Leadership of Shri S.K. Rungta of the National Federation of the Blind.